

I call on you to hold an official public hearing in my state.

Before the disastrous 2003 decision to weaken media ownership rules (which a federal court has now overturned), you held only one official public hearing. Further, FCC officials met behind closed doors 71 times with major broadcasters – but only five times with public interest groups. And to justify your actions, you used deceptive, industry-sponsored research data.

The will of Big Media had been heeded at the expense of American citizens and democracy itself. This has to end. Before you rewrite the ownership rules, I demand an official public FCC hearing in my state, impartial and verifiable research, and transparent debates.

It is time to put the needs of democracy – a diverse, skeptical, independent and competitive media system – ahead of profit-hungry media giants.

For citizens to participate in democracy they need accurate information. Big, corporate media has been more interested in profits than in informing the public. We have been getting simplified sound bites instead of solid news. Issues of local and national importance have been poorly researched and poorly reported. Locally owned media are more likely to adequately report on issues of local importance than are large, national corporations. Our democracy cannot operate in a healthy way if the citizens are not properly informed.

Federal commissions are set up to protect the interests of the citizens. Those commissions should not cater to the interests of corporations at the expense of the citizens. Big media corporations make millions of dollars in profits through free use of public property, the air waves. In return, they should deliver solid, comprehensive public service programming, including responsible, complete, unbiased news reporting. They should not be allowed to ignore regulations because of their size or wealth-wealth acquired through free use of the public air waves.

I call on you to hold an official public hearing in my state. The hearing should be scheduled at a time and a place that the public can conveniently attend. There should be adequate advance notice to the public, so citizens and public interest groups can attend, unlike the last time a hearing was held in this region. Then there was short notice with a change in schedule that made it difficult for working

citizens to attend the beginning of the meeting and sign up to speak. Citizens should have as much, if not more, opportunity to speak as corporate interests. There should be adequate seating and parking for all who want to attend.

The process of democratic government should be open. The FCC should not be meeting at any time behind closed doors with corporations that it regulates. Citizens should have full access to what happens in all FCC meetings. All public hearings should be held in ways that are convenient for the citizens rather than for the convenience of lawyers, lobbyists, and other employees of corporations.